

Did you know that Americans throw out an extra million tons of trash per week from Thanksgiving to Christmas? During this time I hope that Belmont residents will be mindful of this fact and make an effort to reduce their trash by using some of the suggestions listed below.

Wrapping paper and gift bags can be reused and recycled.

Please do not use wrapping paper or gift bags made out of foil. These items look pretty, but can not be recycled. Most paper that is recycled curbside is turned into paperboard, which is used for food packaging. Any foil present can set off alarms at the end of the quality control line for packaged food!

Holiday cards can be reused and recycled.

Holiday cards as well as all occasion cards can be sent to St. Jude's Ranch for Children Recycled Card Program to be refurbished into new cards. Holiday cards can also be sent electronically as a paperless option.

Be conscious of the packaging that gifts come in.

If your purchase comes in excessive packaging look for a different brand or send an email to the company expressing your disappointment with the amount of natural resources, energy and money wasted on ineffective packaging. Please do not put cardboard boxes curbside with the inside packaging inside. Empty the box and flatten. Styrofoam can be placed in the trash and plastic film can be brought to the supermarket and recycled with plastic grocery bags.

Cardboard and catalogues can be recycled.

With online shopping gaining in popularity more households are being inundated with cardboard boxes. According to Earth911.com 90 % of all products are shipped in cardboard. Please remember to recycle by breaking down boxes no larger than 3' x 3' sections and placing under the bin or bundling together. When in doubt about placing it curbside, consider if the recycling crew can easily grip and fit it in the side pocket of the truck. All catalogues and junk mail can be recycled and if you want to reduce the amount arriving to your home go to the websites catalogchoice.org or dmachoice.org for instructions.

Lastly, think about buying a gift that will help with recycling.

A reusable coffee mug or water bottle will help cut down on plastic water bottles and disposable coffee cups for commuters. Some coffee shops are offering a 'bottomless mug' program that can be purchased as a gift.

Reusable lunch bags and sandwich bags are great gifts for school-age children that will save on money and natural resources. Decorative reusable grocery bags can be used as a gift bag and then later to hold groceries. Check out MYECO. By using these bags or your own reusable bags at Shaws/Star Market you can donate money back to the Chenery, Burbank or Butler Schools. Information can be found at MYECO.com. Other gift ideas that require little packaging include tickets to the movies, theater, passes to a museum or gift cards.

Happy Holidays and please remember to reduce, reuse and then recycle during this time as well as throughout the year. Thanks for recycling, improving the environment and quality of life for all!

Also, Belmont is a dual stream community.

Belmont residents need to separate paper and cardboard from plastic, tin, aluminum, and glass. This is accomplished by placing paper in paper bags or setting the paper flat in one bin and by putting plastic, glass, and aluminum containers in a different bin (no plastic bags). For residents that have a lot of container recycling, it might be more efficient to use a larger barrel. It can't be larger than 32 gallons and has to be labeled with 2 recycling stickers (available at DPW or Clerk's Office). Please refer to the recycling guidelines when placing an item in your bin. Completing your recycling correctly pays off in the long run for everyone.

Any questions or suggestions, please contact Mary Beth Calnan/Belmont Recycling Coordinator at mcالنان@belmont-ma.gov or 617-993-2689.